

The Missing Chicken

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Garrett County residents may recall strange and mysterious stories from the past, but few people can recount a story with so long a tale as the one concerning a missing chicken.

This was no ordinary chicken, mind you, but a 10-foot fiberglass chicken that roosted along Route 135 in Mountain Lake Park, at a fast food restaurant called American Burger Sandwich. The chicken belonged to Dick and Becky Williams who purchased it in the 1980's as part of the business. At first, the chicken seemed to be content, greeting passersby and customers alike. It was not until June 1988 that trouble began.

Dick and Becky noticed their restaurant property was damaged due to acts of vandalism as a window was broken and other minor damages carried out. Not until hours after the initial discovery did they realize the biggest crime of all had been committed — their chicken was gone, apparently the victim of a theft. So, where does one hide a 10-foot chicken?

The authorities were notified about the chicken's disappearance and a search was organized to locate it. Unsubstantiated reports surfaced, rumors circulated, and hot tips were phoned to the owners and local police regarding the chicken's disappearance. The prank became a topic of conversation, and many people wanted to be knowledgeable about it.



One report indicated the chicken was thrown from the old Glendale Bridge into Deep Creek Lake. A team of Maryland State Forest and Park Service divers were dispatched to the deep, dark waters under the bridge. To everyone's surprise, three unopened safes were located on the murky bottom, an apparent attempt to discard burglary evidence. But the

missing chicken was not to be rescued as it was not there.

Reports of the missing chicken continued to surface sporadically but success in locating the bird remained elusive. Dick and Becky believed the chicken was loaded into a pickup truck to be hauled away as part of a high school graduation prank. There was evidence to suggest the bird fell from a fleeing truck and suffered serious injuries on the highway. It could be the bird sought refuge on a local farm after suffering damage, but no definitive answer has ever been assigned to the chicken's fate.

Dick and Becky Williams, now proprietors of the popular Long Branch Saloon in Mt. Lake Park, secured a new chicken that continues in a role that victimized the older one, a neighborhood prankster. Neighbors may return from vacation to find the chicken roosting in their front yards. Or people may stop by the chicken's home to have their photographs taken beside it for a light-hearted reason. While the original chicken's whereabouts remains a mystery, Dick and Becky's new one is closely guarded and ready to serve when the occasion arises.

